

REMARKS

By the above amendment, Applicant proposes canceling claims 1-30 and adding new claims 31-58. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added by these amendments. Further, based on the following reasoning, Applicant respectfully traverses those rejections and request allowance of the present application.¹

Applicant submits that since Applicant proposes to cancel claims 1-30, the outstanding rejections of claims 1-30 presented in the Final Office Action of February 13, 2006, are moot. Moreover, Applicant submits that the cited references fail to teach or suggest the elements of new claims 31-58. For example, independent claim 31 recites “sorting the received bids based on criteria selected by the user,” “automatically selecting a best bid from the received bids based on the sorting,” “automatically transmitting a contract document to the service provider associated with the best bid,” and “automatically receiving the contract document from the service provider associated with the best bid, wherein the contract document includes a status of at least one of accepted, rejected, and amended.” None of the cited references, either alone or in any proper combination, teach or suggest at least these elements. Therefore, claim 31 is allowable over the cited references.

¹ As Applicant’s remarks with respect to the Examiner’s rejections are sufficient to overcome these rejections, Applicant’s silence as to certain assertions or requirements applicable to such rejections (e.g., whether a reference constitutes prior art, motivation to combine references, etc.) is not a concession by Applicant that such assertions are accurate or such requirements have been met, and Applicant reserves the right to analyze and dispute such in the future.

Independent claims 44, 57, and 58, although of different scope, recite elements similar to that discussed above with regard to claim 31. Moreover, claims 32-43 and 45-56, by virtue of their dependence from independent claims 31 or 44, also require these elements. As such, Applicant submits that claims 31-58 are allowable over the prior art.

Applicant respectfully requests that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 31-58 in condition for allowance. Applicant submits that new claims 31-58 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

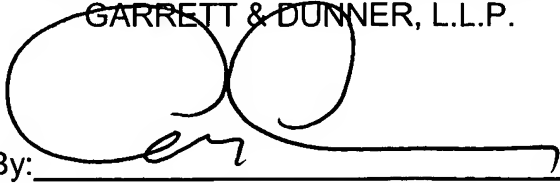
Finally, Applicant submits that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance all of the new claims 31-58.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Gramenopoulos', written over a horizontal line.

Dated: April 20, 2006

By: _____
C. Gregory Gramenopoulos
Reg. No. 36,532